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SUBJECT: A FEW GOOD MINISTERS: WHO MIGHT BE WHERE IN THE
NEXT GERMAN GOVERNMENT

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[1](#)B. BERLIN 01197

[1](#)C. BERLIN 01176

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Classified By: Political Minister Counselor George A. Glass for reasons
1.4 (b, d).

[1](#)1. (C//NF) Summary: The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Free Democratic Party (FDP) began coalition negotiations on October 5, and although personnel issues will be addressed last, speculation on the Cabinet make-up already is in full swing. German cabinet ministers are not necessarily chosen for expertise or suitability; rather, a ministerial lineup first and foremost reflects party interests as well as the need for regional and gender balance. There are always surprises and last minute picks. The only certain choices so far are Angela Merkel (CDU) as Chancellor and Guido Westerwelle (FDP) as Vice Chancellor, although Westerwelle is set to become the next Foreign Minister. Current Chancellery Chief Thomas de Maiziere (also a member of the Bundestag), Economics Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (who campaigned not only for his Bavarian CSU but also throughout Germany for the CDU), and Family Minister Ursula von der Leyen (a Merkel favorite), will remain in the Cabinet, although not necessarily in their current positions.

In addition, Chancellery National Security Adviser-equivalent Christoph Heusgen will most likely remain in his position. Following is an overview of our best guesses on the composition of the future cabinet. End Summary.

The Line Up

[1](#)2. (SBU) Chancellery: Current Chancellery chief and Minister without Portfolio Thomas de Maiziere, 55, will almost certainly be in the next government, either in his current position or as a successor to Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble. De Maiziere has known Merkel since she entered politics in 1990. Although a member of the Cabinet, de Maiziere has had to keep a low profile and act as an honest broker; as Interior Minister he could sharpen his political profile and play a more independent role. Merkel may not be ready to have de Maiziere move on; if he does, however, Norbert Roettgen, 44, is his most likely alternative. Roettgen is the business manager of the CDU/CSU caucus and has worked closely with Merkel since her days as caucus chairman during 2002-05.

[1](#)3. (SBU) It is too early in the game for open discussion of sub-cabinet positions or changes within the Chancellery. Federal Press spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm has become an important member of Merkel's inner circle and should stay on, as should her foreign policy adviser Christoph Heusgen and her financial policy adviser and G-20 sherpa, Jens

Weidmann. Merkel currently has three members of parliament who work for her as ministers of state in the Chancellery. There is usually turnover in these positions and they are often used to compensate party figures or factions that did not get higher posts.

¶4. (C) Foreign Affairs, Defense & Development: Westerwelle's almost certain position as Foreign Minister means that the Christian Democrats will retain the Defense Ministry and probably get the Ministry for Economic Cooperation as well. Current Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung, 60, has a good chance of keeping his post despite widespread criticism of his performance because of support from Hesse Minister-President and CDU vice-chairman Roland Koch. Current Economics Minister zu Guttenberg could move to Defense to make way for a Free Democratic Economics Minister.

CDU foreign policy expert Eckart von Klaeden, 43, is a possible replacement should Jung be moved out and Guttenberg stays put. Jung's steadfast support for the German PRT commander who ordered the September 4 Kunduz air strikes has greatly enhanced Jung's standing in the Bundeswehr while opposition attacks on Jung have created a backlash effect within the CDU/CSU that may further help him. There has been some discussion (particularly in FDP circles) of folding the development ministry back into the Foreign Office to give Westerwelle more clout and to ensure that development policy is more closely in sync with foreign policy priorities, especially on Afghanistan. CSU Bundestag group chief Peter Ramsauer, 55, has been mentioned although he shows little interest in moving to the Cabinet, as demonstrated when he passed up the chance to replace Michael Glos as Economics Minister. CSU development policy spokesman Christian Ruck, 55, is another possibility. Embassy contacts note that if

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the development ministry were to go to the CDU, Bundestag caucus vice chairman and human rights and development spokesman Arnold Vaatz, 54, is a possibility.

¶5. (SBU) Finance/Economics: Zu Guttenberg, 38, looks likely to stay in his current position, and if he does, FDP tax expert Hermann Otto Solms, 68, could become Finance Minister.

A zu Guttenberg-led Economics Ministry may gain responsibilities in the energy sector or on international financial policy to beef up the portfolio of one of Germany's most popular politicians. If zu Guttenberg moves to Defense or Finance -- two less likely scenarios -- then the FDP would take back the Economics Ministry, which it led from 1969 to ¶1998. Rainer Bruederle, 64, has been long considered the FDP's first choice for the job, but the press has reported neither Merkel nor Westerwelle wants him in the position because he is viewed as not strong enough to take over the Ministry in a time of economic recession. Hesse's Minister President Roland Koch, 51, is often described as a possible Christian Democratic Finance Minister, but he has denied any interest in moving to Berlin. Some news commentators and business leaders have called on Westerwelle to head a "super ministry" that would have broad economic and financial competence; however, FDP sources tell us that he will not pass up the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of his mentor, former Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and the record of such "super" ministries in Germany has not been good.

¶6. (C) Interior/Justice: Former Justice Minister (1992-96) and Bavarian FDP leader Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, 58, has a lock on one of these positions and most likely her old job -- which she resigned from rather than agree to legislation allowing for wiretaps. Current Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaueble's future is more uncertain; several contacts have told us he wants to stay where he is but there have been several press reports that Merkel would like to move the 67-year old out to make way for a younger and less controversial figure. Schaueble's success as minister and his position as one of the last true conservatives within the CDU raise the cost of simply pushing him aside, however, and his supporters have rallied to his side in the game of competitive leaking. Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger has suggested that the FDP might even seek the more senior

Interior Ministry, but the party's desire to profile itself as a protector of civil liberties would be hard to square with the Interior Minister's job as the nation's top law enforcement and counter-terrorism official.

¶7. (SBU) Environment: Current CDU Baden-Wuerttemberg Environment Minister Tanja Goenner, 40, is the clear favorite for the post. She has the expertise, is close to Merkel, and would bring a young dynamic woman to the Cabinet. She is a good contact of the Embassy and ConGren Frankfurt. East German Katherina Reiche, 36 and the CDU/CSU caucus vice chair for education, research, and the environment, is a much less likely possibility. Should the FDP get the post, its Bundestag caucus spokesman for environmental affairs, Michael Kauch, 42, is a possibility.

¶8. (SBU) Family/Health: Currently led by a Social Democrat, the Health Ministry could go to either the CDU or FDP. Current Family Minister Ursula von der Leyen, 50, is reportedly interested in moving to the Health Ministry but Merkel wants to keep von der Leyen where she is, since the trained doctor and mother of seven has helped the CDU modernize its image and score points on work and family issues. Former Saar health minister and current head of the Federal Insurance Office Josef Hecken, 50, is close to Merkel and the most likely CDU candidate for health. Embassy sources say that Daniel Bahr, 32, is the FDP's candidate for the Health Ministry. If von der Leyen does move on, Free Democrat Silvana Koch-Mehrin, 38, and now a Vice President of the European Parliament, has been mentioned for this or other posts. She is close to Westerwelle and very photogenic despite questions about how hard working she may be.

¶9. (SBU) Labor: CDU-Secretary General and Merkel-confidant Ronald Pofalla, 50, is the favorite to take charge of the currently SPD-led Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs. A less likely CDU alternative is Karl-Josef Laumann, who has been the labor and health minister in North-Rhine Westphalia since 2005 and who has strong trade union ties. In the unlikely case of the portfolio going to the FDP, its general secretary and Westerwelle-confidant Dirk Niebel, 46, is the top candidate. Philipp Roesler, 36, a true rising star in the FDP and Economics, Labor and Transportation Minister and Vice-Minister President in Lower Saxony, has also been mentioned but says he wants to remain in Hannover for now to be near his family.

¶10. (SBU) Education: Current Education and Research Minister Annette Schavan, 55, appears set to become the next head of the CDU's Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, and the FDP, which has

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emphasized the importance of education issues in its campaign, may seek to take over the Ministry. The education spokeswoman for the FDP caucus and an eastern German, Cornelia Pieper, 55, would be the frontrunner although Koch-Mehrin has also been mentioned. If the CDU keeps the ministry, Katherina Reiche might be the nominee; she is young, talented, and a Merkel supporter.

¶11. (SBU) Agriculture: Current CSU Minister for Nutrition, Agriculture, and Consumer Affairs Ilse Aigner, 43, is likely to stay on in the Cabinet and at her post, although the Ministry could get a new name and some change in its responsibilities because CSU chair and Bavarian Minister-President Horst Seehofer no longer sees as much political benefit for being responsible for agriculture policy and bearing the brunt of dissatisfaction that Bavarian farmers often feel toward policymakers.

¶12. (SBU) Transportation and Construction: The names mentioned for this post all appear unlikely; Volker Kauder, 60 and recently reelected head of the CDU/CSU Bundestag caucus, Peter Ramsauer, 55, the vice chair and head of the Bavarian CSU delegation, and Hesse Minister-President Roland Koch, all are unlikely to give up their present positions for the job. This post, while having a big budget, often is allocated late and given to fill out regional or party gaps.

¶13. (SBU) Caucus Chiefs: Volker Kauder and Guido Westerwelle were recently reelected chairmen of the CDU/CSU and FDP caucuses, respectively. Westerwelle will obviously move on to the Cabinet; his most likely replacement is Birgid

Homburger, 44, a defense policy expert and strong supporter within the FDP of international peacekeeping and the ISAF mission. Kauder appears happy with his current job and Merkel supports keeping him there; in the unlikely case he moves over to the Cabinet, Pofalla or Roettgen are his most likely replacements. CONGEN Munich has heard rumors that Aigner might replace Ramsauer if he would leave his current position as head of the Bavarian CSU delegation and vice-chairman of the CDU/CSU caucus to become transportation minister, an option that Seehofer appears more interested in than does Ramsauer.

¶14. (C) EU Commissioner: Although this position is not officially part of coalition negotiations, Germany's need to name a replacement to Guenter Verheugen is likely to become part of the mix. Schaeuble has often been discussed as a potential EU Commissioner, and his appointment there would make room for a newcomer at the Interior Ministry. Our contacts say he does not want the position because his paralysis makes it difficult for him to travel. Peter Hintze, 59, currently Parliamentary State Secretary in the Economics Ministry, helped Merkel learn the ropes in Bonn when he served as her parliamentary state secretary in the Women and Youth Ministry during 1991-92; he is another possible choice. Koch has also been mentioned for the job because of his strong business contacts and economic expertise.

¶15. (C) Comment: It is still much too early to make any firm predictions about the Cabinet but the names that are being discussed suggest that the new government will seek incremental change at most. Merkel should be able to strengthen her position by bringing in new Christian Democratic ministers who are closely identified with her and who share her centrist, pragmatic approach to government. Westerwelle and Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger may be present the biggest challenges to Merkel: Westerwelle because of his aggressiveness and press skills and Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, because of her expertise and commitment to greater controls over the government surveillance. End Comment.

Putting Together a Cabinet: A Few Rules

¶16. (SBU) In building a cabinet, the future coalition partners first negotiate on the number of ministries each party will get as well as the responsibilities that belong to each ministry. So far, it looks like the Cabinet will have about 14-16 members, with around 8 from the CDU, 4 or 5 from the FDP and 2 or 3 from the CSU. Sets of ministries are seen as related and are normally divided among the coalition parties to ensure that a single party cannot make policy without broader agreement; since 1966 the Foreign Office has belonged to a member of the junior coalition partner to balance the Chancellor's foreign policy prerogatives. Foreign and defense go to different parties, and during the last black-yellow coalition the CSU usually held the Ministry for Economic Cooperation (development) to afford it some competence in foreign policy making. In previous periods of SPD-FDP and CDU/CSU-FDP rule, Economics and Finance were also divided between the two sides as were Interior and Justice (a practice shared by the current Grand Coalition). In light of

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the FDP's strong showing in the federal election, it should begin with the Foreign Ministry, Finance or Economics Ministry, and Justice or Interior Ministry, while the CDU/CSU will get Defense and one each of the other two sets of ministries. Because these sets of ministries are generally dealt with together, our discussion of who goes where reflects this practice. A final rule to remember is that the FDP will insist, as it has done in the past, that it can choose its ministers without interference from Merkel. In 2005, the CSU also claimed this right, although its poor showing in the federal elections puts it in a weaker position and Merkel will have some say over CSU ministers.
Murphy